

Perils of the United States

ADDRESS OF

REV. CHARLES WADSWORTH, Jr., D.D.

BEFORE THE COLONIAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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MARK TWAIN tells of an experience in a western town, where he was to lecture. Arriving in the afternoon and having some time on his hands, he decided to explore the community and see if its inhabitants were thrilling with anticipation of the privilege which they were about to enjoy. Rather to his chagrin, he could discover no signs indicating any knowledge of his coming. Accordingly he went into the village store, and asked the proprietor, "Is there going to be a lecture in this town this evening?" The proprietor was filling a can with kerosene, and rising from a stooping posture replied, "Why yes, stranger, I sort of suspicion there is going to be a lecture, because I have been selling eggs all day." Those having charge of this Anniversary have wisely camouflaged all features of a lecture behind the pleasing disguise of a Lunch; and you may feel some resentment toward me when you find an address ambushed in a bill of fare. The only way I can disarm your natural antagonism is to select a topic which will interest all; and I feel sure that my subject at least will appeal to all patriotic hearts. I am to say a few words upon "*The Perils of the United States.*"

Never before did this Republic face so many or so great perils as those which now threaten it: perils at home, and perils abroad; perils of open hostility, and perils of concealed treachery.

Of the perils abroad, of course, the outstanding danger is Germany. No more appalling peril ever menaced mankind than Prussian Militarism. Your President tells me, that in your spring meeting you commemorate the granting of the Charter of Pennsylvania to William Penn. When Penn arrived in the new world, he found himself confronted by and compelled to deal with savages; and we to-day, standing not far from the spot on which he stood two hundred and thirty-six years ago, find ourselves confronted by and compelled to deal with savages. How different are the savages that confront us from the savages that confronted him! Penn's savages were primitive and simple; our savages are subtle, educated, and self-conscious. Penn's savages knew nothing of Nature's secrets, and controlled none of her forces. The savages confronting us have explored the recesses of creation, discovered the laws of Nature, threaded the labyrinth of matter, and mastered the forces of the universe. Penn's savages stood upon the lowest plain of ignorance; our savages stand upon the very pinnacles of science, panoplied like gods with immeasurable power. Penn's savages were cave-men; our savages are super-men. But in all the qualities and excellences of manhood, how infinitely below those poor aborigines of the forest are these so-called super-men of the twentieth century! Penn's savages were amenable to reason, responsive to kindness; and although half-naked red men, were essentially human. The savages confronting us are dehumanized monsters, hideous embodiments of "schrecklichkeit." With all their

amazing abilities, and with all their towering attainments, they have dug themselves into a pit immeasurably more degraded than that in which primeval savages grovelled. All the climbing of the ages has ended for them in an abyss of demonism and depravity. The great process of evolution has in them taken an appalling turn, as it did in Nebuchadnezzar the king; and has brought forth a beastly insanity which is the menace of the world.

Imagination easily depicts the consequences which would follow if Germany were to win this war. There would be a wassail of frightfulness such as might be expected from those who ravaged Belgium and sunk the *Lusitania*. The horrors of the ancient Assyrian tyranny would be surpassed. All moral obligations of justice and honor; all such considerations as decency, mercy, humanity, would be scornfully repudiated as "scraps of paper" not binding upon super-men. Christian civilization would be torpedoed by the submarine of a pagan militarism. Nations would be exploited under the most thorough and adroit despotism ever known, a despotism so knit together by telephones, telegraphs and wireless nerves, and made so infernally effective by the equipments of science, that its little finger would be thicker than the loins of even the Roman Inquisition. Distance would offer no difficulties to its administration; oceans would interpose no barriers to its career. On the other side of the world, it would levy its tributes as easily, and enforce its will as absolutely, as upon a city lying at its very gates. America would be only a larger, richer Belgium to

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be negotiated, until the once happy citizens of a republican régime would groan under the oppression of the Pan-German yoke.

This horrible peril is ominous and imminent, threatening civilization and humanity to-day, because of the delay of the United States, and the way in which it was held back from doing its duty, when humanity and civilization were attacked. It was moved neither to serve God, nor even to prepare itself. Three invaluable and pivotal years were lost beyond recall for this Republic.

I am reminded of a story of an angler, who, having caught nothing on his trip, as he returned stopped at a store and bought a fish to take home, so that the festivities which had engrossed his time might be hidden. He was a clever manipulator of facts, an artistic manufacturer of history; so he graphically described to his wife how he had skilfully hooked this particular fish; and played it with remarkable judgment. "If I had tried to pull it out of the water too soon," he told her, "I would have broken my line. I played it until it was tired out. By my remarkable intuition, I knew precisely when the psychological moment had arrived; and when I saw that the right time had come, I promptly put my net under it, and landed it without hurting my tackle. A great deal depends upon the skill of the angler." The wife smelled the fish, which was very stale; and looking at her gifted husband, asked, "Did you say you caught this fish to-day?"

"Yes," he replied.

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“Then,” she scornfully answered, with her nose held high in the air, and an expression of utter disgust upon her face, “all I can say is, that it was very lucky you did not postpone catching it until to-morrow.”

These three years have not been neglected by the Germans. Our delay was their salvation. It gave them time to develop their submarines; and with their propaganda to debauch Italy and demoralize Russia; until now, with their millions set free from the eastern front they have been able to concentrate their military forces upon the western lines, where poor America has too few soldiers. These soldiers of the United States are magnificent men, and will give a splendid account of themselves; but they are only a handful in such a colossal operation. A transcendent issue hangs at this moment in the balance; and all that through these years has stood between civilization and the most terrible disaster, all that stands to-day between the United States and dire tragedy, are the British fleet, and the English and French soldiers.

Speaking in Philadelphia last week the very Reverend George Adam Smith described, how, in the fateful days of August, 1914, the people of Great Britain waited with bated breath and the most intense anxiety to learn the decision of their Government; and how a wave of thankfulness and relief swept over their communities, when it was announced, that their Government had not paltered with a Call of God, had not played politics with a moral crisis, had not sought to avoid a dangerous duty; but, standing by its treaty obligations, had leaped to the help

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of Belgium, and declared war upon the assassin of Humanity.

The citizens of the United States have every reason to be humbly thankful that the Leaders of France and England in 1914 were statesmen of enlightened intellect and moral nature. If they had been so mentally deficient as not to be able to read the signs of the times until three years too late; if they had been so morally blind that it took them thirty-six supine months to distinguish right from wrong, and good from evil; if they had been so spiritually callous as to have remained unmoved by the Call of God and the Cry of Humanity, and to have stretched forth no hand against the Beast that was ravaging civilization, this Republic would long since have fallen before the unopposed rush of the mighty machine of Prussian Militarism.

If civilization is saved, it will be due to the fact that during those years England and France, under leaders who were not deaf to Humanity's appeal, sprang without delay to the "help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." If the United States is saved, it will be due to the fact, that during those years, England and France did not shirk their duty; but, rushing into the frightful hell, nobly withstood the savages of the twentieth century. All honor to them, and to their Leaders!

The Prophet Ezekiel, in one of his impassioned outbursts of inspired eloquence, proclaims the responsibility of the leader in a great crisis:

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“The Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them—When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of that land choose a man of their coasts and set him for a watchman; if when the sword come upon the land, the watchman blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, his blood will I require of the watchman’s hand.”

Four years after God called for help in Belgium, and three years after American women and infants wailed for help in the *Lusitania*, the United States is beginning to get ready to oppose the peril, which statesmen saw clearly in 1914; and that is the reason this German menace is so portentous to-day.

The perils menacing this Republic are not limited to the foreign field. *There are perils also within our own borders.*

Here too *the Germans loom as one of the most serious.* Germany has accomplished as much by means of her propaganda and spies as she has by means of her armies. Germans have reduced this matter to a system and a science. They study the psychology of the peoples whom they seek to deceive, searching out the yellow streaks, the weak spots, mental and moral. With an art infernal in its cleverness they adapt their message to the personal equation of those whom they desire to influence, blowing now hot, now cold; spreading one sort of falsehoods in the Balkans, an entirely different sort in Russia, another in

Italy, and another in America. They employ a thousand different agents. They speak through a thousand different voices. One of their more recent voices was the so-called legislature of the contemptible Bolsheviki, which guided by German agents, replying to some message from Washington, sent greetings to the people of the United States, and denounced this war as a capitalists' trick. This message yellow newspapers reported, and so became German instruments to disseminate her propaganda in American communities. She has innumerable spies in this country from wealthy social lights to tramps, from conductors of orchestras to college professors, from politicians to editors, from employers to laborers. America has been too patient to these traitors. For three years free rein was given to the official Representatives of Germany, and they were allowed with impunity to carry on through this Republic the plottings of Berlin. The harvests of those sowings have sprung up, and now can be rooted out only by vigorous action. A Boche in the trenches as an acknowledged enemy is abominable enough, a ruthless Hun; but a Boche in this country, as a concealed enemy, is intolerable vermin. Extermination is demanded.

A gentleman in a restaurant was given an egg which was impossible. He called the waiter, saying angrily, "Waiter, this egg is bad."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter; "what shall I do with it?"

"I think," replied the diner disgustedly, "you had better wring its neck."

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The sooner the necks of these bad eggs, these traitors and spies, are wrung, the sooner America will be safe.

Spies are by no means our only internal danger. Some of the most ominous of our internal perils are due to foolish Americans; and *one of the most sinister of these to-day is the insidious undermining of the Constitution of the United States.*

The Constitution has preserved this Nation in existence, and has made it great. It was not the child of frantic sentimentalists. It was not the child of extravagant emotionalists like Rousseau. Our Constitution is an Anglo-Saxon product, and is characterized by Anglo-Saxon excellencies. It has the sanity and equilibrium of the remarkable statesmen who contrived it and so admirably equipped it with safety valve and balance wheel, that Daniel Webster, the profoundest statesman of his generation, pronounced it "A miraculous Constitution." Through one hundred and thirty years, it has demonstrated its inestimable value and its inexhaustible virtue. The United States has survived terrible crises, and continued to increase in spite of searching visitations, because of this elastic and yet stable and stabilizing Constitution. It is a masterpiece of the genius of statecraft.

To-day this splendid Constitution is being insidiously undermined, not only by the hair-brained, or by vicious anarchists. Of course it is to be expected that lightweight nit-wits should assail it. We would almost be tempted to doubt its worth, if such acrid minds approved it. But to-day it is being insidiously undermined by some

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who have sworn to maintain it. Its adjustments for maintaining the balance of power in the Government, by distributing that power among three coördinate, equal, and independent Departments, have been ignored. The Legislative Department has been so superciliously subordinated, and such supreme authority has been assumed by the Executive, that Congress has sunk, until its condition sometimes suggests the Reichstag rather than the British Parliament.

To say that no former Executive in the history of the United States ever possessed the power now controlled by the President, would be putting it so mildly as to conceal the truth. It would be accurate to say, that no king possesses as much power. The King of England would not dare, without consulting his Cabinet and Parliament, to announce exactly what the millions of British citizens were to shed their blood and die for, or precisely what the terms of peace must be. It is bewildering. Power over food and coal and railroads and factories, power over the money of the Nation, power over the lives and property of the citizens! And yet the continual demand is, "more power," "more power."

It is not more power that is needed, but a better use of the power already assumed.

A colored minister was preaching at a camp meeting, and making the welkin ring with his vociferations. "O Lord," he shouted, "give us power, give us power, O Lord! That is what we need, Lord, power, power, power." At last one of the more intelligent hearers became dis-

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gusted and exclaimed, "Niggah! What you need is not powah, but ideals."

The lack of planning and coördination has filled thoughtful observers with consternation. Many fiascoes are now old stories. The most recent is the aeroplane situation. It was brought out in the Senate within the last few days, that \$650,000,000 have been expended in aeroplane construction, with a result at the end of a year, not one battle plane, not one scouting plane has been built; and our soldiers in the trenches faced the perfectly equipped Germans, without an aeroplane for scouting or for defence. Meanwhile utterly false reports, reports intentionally misleading, "naked untruths" were deliberately published in the official Bulletin of the Committee of Public Information; and when these disgraceful facts were admitted on the floor of the Senate, a Senator defending the Administration had the effrontery to ask, "What difference does it make?"

What is needed is a better use of the power already possessed. If a chauffeur driving a twenty horse-power Ford has accidents, jams the car in the traffic, and ditches it on the roadside, the trouble is not due to lack of power, but to lack of skill. Give him a sixty horse-power Rolls Royce, and the accidents will be more serious. What is needed is not a more powerful car, but a more skilful chauffeur.

The proposition to throw the Constitution overboard in order to get results would be like proposing to mariners in a storm that they throw their charts overboard so as to

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get more quickly to port. They need their charts a thousand times more vitally in the storm than they do when everything is calm.

The Constitution of the United States is the Palladium of our Liberty. Great wars have been waged through countless generations; millions of heroes have shed their blood and laid down their lives, in order to secure for mankind the privileges of Freedom which are safeguarded in its wise provisions, provisions which are the buttresses of this Republic. To permit those buttresses to be undermined or removed for a second would be a folly both criminal and contemptible.

George Washington would not have allowed it. So far from asking for power, when more power was offered to him, he indignantly declined it, and sternly rebuked those who made the suggestion.

A laborer's wife was sick at a hospital; and he stopped every morning on his way to work to inquire how she was. The first morning they told him, "She is improved," and he went to his task with a lighter heart. The second morning the reply was, "She is improved," and he was filled with hope. So upon the third and fourth mornings the report was, "She is improved," "She is improved." Then the fifth morning he was told, "She is dead;" and the poor man staggered down the street, bewildered and crushed. A friend meeting him, exclaimed:

"Why, John! What on earth is the matter?"

"My wife is dead," he sobbed.

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“Dead?” exclaimed his friend. “I am very sorry. What did she die of?”

“Oh!” moaned the heart-broken man; “she died of *improvements*.”

Unless they are careful, the citizens of this country may sometime discover *that Liberty has died of improvements*. Citizens who are so bereft as to allow the Palladium of Liberty, the Constitution, to be undermined, would get no more than their desserts, if they awoke to find themselves betrayed to the tyranny of a Bolsheviki mob manipulated by a hypocritical demagogue. Making “a scrap of paper” of the Constitution is worse treason than trampling upon the flag, because the flag is only the symbol of that of which the Constitution is the essential embodiment. To trample on the flag is to insult the symbol of the Republic; to make “a scrap of paper” of its Constitution is to assassinate the Republic’s very life.

In the midst of times which test our intelligence as well as try our souls, the great asset of our beloved Nation is the Patriotism of its inhabitants. They have poured out their money by billions. I admire their liberality. They have given their sons. The best young men of America are in the service of the Government. I reverence their consecration. The most beautiful thing in our land to-day is this army of young men who have offered their lives for the service of Liberty. No more heroic spectacle ever inspired any generation. They have given up opportunity, friends, home, wife, child, loved one. They were rich, yet for our sakes they became poor. They

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emptied themselves to serve Humanity. They face hardship, agony, mutilation, death, in order to protect others. They go down into hell for their fellows. Uncomplainingly, gladly, enthusiastically, they go; and the chastisement of our peace is laid upon them. Their consecration and self-sacrifice is the most exalted spiritual reality of our time. It is also the strongest appeal to us to be patriotic, to support the Liberty Loan, and the great Cause, for surely the least we can do is to be loyal to these young men as they suffer and die for us.

Surrounded by perils both internal and external, confronted by the one supreme task of winning this war, the deepest wisdom which I hold in my heart, and which I venture to bring to you to-day, is the duty of being loyal to two things: (1) The duty of being loyal to the Constitution of the United States, which safeguards American Liberty at home, and (2) the duty of being loyal to the splendid soldiers and sailors of the United States, who are defending American Liberty abroad.

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